

## University of Dayton eCommons

---

News Releases

Marketing and Communications

---

2-24-2006

# Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop Creates World's Longest Mad Lib

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news\\_rls](https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls)

---

### Recommended Citation

"Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop Creates World's Longest Mad Lib" (2006). *News Releases*. 9649.  
[https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news\\_rls/9649](https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/9649)

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Marketing and Communications at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in News Releases by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact [frice1@udayton.edu](mailto:frice1@udayton.edu), [mschlangen1@udayton.edu](mailto:mschlangen1@udayton.edu).



Feb. 24, 2006  
 Contact: Tim Bete  
 bete@udayton.edu  
 (937) 229-4960

---

## NEWS RELEASE

### ERMA BOMBECK WRITERS' WORKSHOP CREATES WORLD'S LONGEST MAD LIB®

Dayton, Ohio — Call me Ishmael. Or Marsha Brady. Or, maybe, Mr. Potato Head.

Using the literary classic *Moby Dick*, nearly 200 writers registered for the upcoming University of Dayton Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop ([www.HumorWriters.org](http://www.HumorWriters.org)) have created the world's longest "Mad Lib®." A Mad Lib is a story with blank spaces where words have been left out. The leader asks the other players to provide words to fill in the blanks but doesn't tell them what the story is about. The result is a humorous story with lines such as, "Call me Mr. Potato Head." Mad Lib is a registered trademark of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.

Pulitzer Prize-winning humorist Dave Barry will give the opening address at the sold-out writers' workshop, which is held every other year to teach and encourage humor and human interest writers. The world record will be announced at the 5:30 p.m. dinner before his 8:15 p.m. talk on Thursday, March 23, at the Dayton Marriott Hotel, 1414 S. Patterson Blvd.

A typical Mad Lib has 10 to 20 blank spaces and is played with three to four players. The *Moby Dick* Mad Lib features more than 1,100 blanks and is believed to be the longest Mad Lib ever created. The blanks were filled in by 197 attendees of the March 23-25 workshop.

"I think Herman Melville would approve of using *Moby Dick* as the base for the world's longest Mad Lib," said Tim Bete, director of the workshop. "After all, Melville wrote, 'A good laugh is a mighty good thing, and rather too scarce a good thing.'"

Some of the funniest lines in the *Moby Dick* Mad Lib include:

- "Tonya Harding, nevertheless, is a mighty pleasant rottweiler."
- "My going on this whaling sissy, formed part of the sultry bobblehead of Antonio Banderas that was drawn up a long time ago."
- "Fifty years ago did Viagra kill fifteen whales between a sunrise and a sunset. And that Brad

-over-

Pitt — so like a corkscrew now — was flung in Microsoft seas, and run away with by a whale, years afterwards slain off the Cape of Blanco."

The complete 36-page *Moby Dick* Mad Lib can be read at [MadLib.HumorWriters.org](http://MadLib.HumorWriters.org). A blank version is also available on the site. "It's a fantastic thing to have if you're going on a 14-hour drive with your kids and are worried about them getting bored," Bete said.

Roger Price and Leonard Stern invented Mad Libs in the 1950s. Price died in 1990, but Stern keeps the tradition alive by writing new Mad Libs. Price and Stern are both well known for their comedy writing. In the 1950s, Price developed cartoons called "Doodles," which were turned into a television show. He also worked with Bob Hope on a newspaper humor column. Stern was a successful television writer, who worked with Jackie Gleason on scripts for the "Honeymooners." He also wrote for the "Phil Silvers Show" and "The Steve Allen Show," and he wrote and produced the original "Get Smart" television series.

Why create the world's longest Mad Lib? "We wanted to give workshop attendees something to write about and what could be a better cure for writer's block than helping set a world record," Bete said. "The attendees have an incredible combined vocabulary, suggesting words such as 'bodacious,' 'flammable' and 'aardvark.' And I think Dave Barry would agree that the 'Bodacious, Flammable Aardvarks' is a great name for a rock band."

Other speakers at the 2006 Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop include *USA Today's* Craig Wilson; Susan Reinhardt, author of *Not Tonight Honey Wait Til I'm a Size 6*; and Kristen Godsey, editor of *Writer's Digest* magazine, among others. Workshop sponsors include AuthorHouse, American Greetings, Andrews McMeel Foundation, National Society of Newspaper Columnists, *Dayton Daily News*, Dayton Marriott, Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop Endowment and the University of Dayton National Alumni Association.

Humorist Erma Bombeck graduated from the University of Dayton in 1949 and credited UD with preparing her for life and work, for making her believe she could write. Her syndicated column, "At Wit's End," appeared in more than 900 newspapers. She wrote 12 books, nine of which made *The New York Times'* bestsellers list. Bombeck also appeared regularly on ABC-TV's "Good Morning America" for 11 years. She was still writing her column for Universal Press Syndicate and developing a new book for HarperCollins Publishers when she died from complications of a kidney transplant on April 22, 1996.

"This is probably the first and last world record for the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop," Bete said. "The largest simultaneous whoopee cushion sit is 3,614 participants, and we can't compete with that — but we could create a Mad Lib about it."

-30-

For media interviews, contact **Tim Bete** at (937) 229-4960 or [bete@udayton.edu](mailto:bete@udayton.edu) and **Jess Michaels**, senior publicist, Penguin Young Readers Group at (212) 414-3437 or [Jessica.Michaels@us.penguinroup.com](mailto:Jessica.Michaels@us.penguinroup.com). Mad Libs is a registered trademark of Penguin Group (USA) Inc. All rights reserved.